

Ai wo Kou Kemono  
by Miss Ragdoll

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Summary: My sanity. I never put much thought on it, something like this. Looking back, I should have seen it coming. I should, I just should. How painful it would be. How tortuous, how miserable. The process of heartbreak, the stages until you are dead inside, the last ray of hope vanishing, the last light consuming. The death of a heart.

## 1. Chapter 1

Hello again! This story is a love triangle between Saito Hajime, Yukimura Chizuru and Okita Souji. Again, I'm sorry if it looks a bit OOC, I didn't include any references to Ochimizu (water of life) or other characters, so it's mainly focused on these three and... well this is a one shot fanfic, full of drama and angst and unrequited love and lots and lots of sad things. You've been warned.

Enjoy!

ps: I don't own Hakuouki nor any of it's characters (but OMG if I did...)

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><p>Ai wo Kou Kemono - æ„›ã, 'ä¹žã•†ã,±ãf¢ãfŽ<p>

Beasts begging for love.

\_ "My love is as a fever longing still,\_

\_ For that which longer nurseth the disease;\_

\_ Feeding on that which doth preserve the ill,\_

\_ The uncertain sickly appetite to please.\_

\_My reason, the physician to my love,\_  
\_Angry that his prescriptions are not kept,\_  
\_Hath left me, and I desperate now approve\_  
\_Desire is death, which physic did except.\_  
\_Past cure I am, now Reason is past care,\_  
\_And frantic-mad with evermore unrest;  
\_My thoughts and my discourse as madmen's are,\_  
\_At random from the truth vainly expressed;  
\_\*\_\*\_\*For I have sworn thee fair, and thought thee bright, \*\*\_  
\_\*\_\*\_Who art as black as hell, as dark as night."\*\*\_

\* \* \*

><p>My sanity. I never put much thought on it, something like this. Looking back, I should have seen it coming. I should, I just should. How painful it would be. How tortuous, how miserable. The process of heartbreak, the stages until you are dead inside, the last ray of hope vanishing, the last light consuming. The death of a heart.</p>

There is no guilty, nor innocent here. We each hurt each other, we made it unnecessary painful for each other, tortured each other. We consumed each other's lives, feed on their hopes and finally died. We lived of the dreams that never came, we died of hunger, we died of unrequited love. It was even more complicated than this. We died from love, for the love, because of love. Our miserable, confussed hearts ruled over our minds, took control and killed us.

Saito never knew if I loved him, I never knew if I loved him just as much as I loved Okita. I never knew if Okita loved me, and he always took me for granted. We chased each other, danced a predatory dance, stabbing our hearts, bleeding our feelings out until we dried.

Three people, agonising over someone else's interest. Three people that could have been happy had they never met. Mulling it over, maybe I was the trigger. But by the time I wanted to get away it was too late; we were already tied, entangled, the red string of fate drawing a beautiful knot that strangled us, a noose so tight it rot our brains and left us begging for more, more sympathy, more misery. More love. A fake four lettered word that saved us for a little while from our painful existence.

We loved intensely, we loved desperately, we loved insanely. And so we consumed ourselves quickly, leaving nothing left.

\* \* \*

><p>Spring was late. Winter that year had been rough, countless snows gave into floods and mists, and temperatures were cold. The weather was merciless. Most of the soldiers at the compound were sick with

cold and flu, and the continuous campaigns weren't helping recovering their health. No doubt Hijikata was worried. But there was something that worried him more than that; Okita's cough.<p>

For the past months it had become worse somehow, making him bend in pain and unable to lift his sword.

>To the world, he was just another sick soldier. But we knew the truth behind the calculated lie hidden from the rest of the world: Okita had tuberculosis.<br>Diagnosed months ago by Matsumoto sensei, only Saito and I knew of it from the begining. By the time Hijikata and the others knew, it was already severe. Kondou san was devastated, which only fueled the silent guilt that ate at Okita's despair. He wanted to be useful. More than anything, his only purpose in life was to be useful to Kondou san and the Shinsengumi. And now he saw he couldn't. All his rage was mostly directed at Hijikata for isolating him in a room, though he knew very well he could not fight like before. We all knew this was an excuse, a way to blame someone else's over his sickness, but still it hurt to see him so miserable when he thought he was alone, and so angry and deceived when he confronted Hijikata over anything related to his illness or the Shinsengumi.

And then it was me. I did as much as I could to relieve him from his estate, took care of anything he needed. His contact with Hijikata and the rest of the captains lessened in time, and I was in complete charge of him for most of the time. He allowed only me to see his weakness. That's why, his rage gradually shifted to me. He just needed to vent up, a scape goat, and I became that to him, aware and willingly, so that he could take off his shoulders some of the self imposed pressure .

I became his. His to shout and cry, his to push away and take over, to use and throw. I did all I could, and nothing seemed to be enough. A doll in his hands, comforting him in anyway he wanted, if only for a brief moment. One moment he accepted me, but the next he regretted it and pushed me away. I seemed to touch his heart one moment, and the next one the wall between us was there again. It was painful but I persevered.

As a doctor's daughter I knew there was no cure for the tuberculosis. At much there was a way to make its symptoms less severe, and prolong the life of the sick, but nothing else. Okita's condition was only due to worsen if he stayed here. But there was just no way for him to leave the Shinsengumi, to leave Kondou: this was his life, his entire life, his only purpose. As if born only to fulfill this duty. Once you understand this, the only thing you can do are palliative cares. And so I did, with extreme care I did all I could to make his health better, if only a little. He wouldn't be able to fight, but he wouldn't have to leave. And he wouldn't die. Yet.

I spent everyday with him, becoming his private nurse. All he needed I provided. I tried to take care of him emotionally and physically, overstepping all the boundaries I knew I should have never crossed. At that time, way before that, I already knew I loved him. I was in love with this man, that was dying. This man full of rage and regrets, that could not seem to love because he was suffering too much to even care for the others.

I don't know who used the other first, after that it only became a matter of chance. I found myself involved in a destructive one-sided

relationship, in which I gave my heart out, and he took everything else. I would have died for him. I would have given him my life to save his, and I didn't even need him to answer my feelings. But things don't go that smoothly, not with someone who's at his limit. He took my feelings of love for him and transformed them in pity, a consequence of his twisted self hate; everything I did was for his sake, yet he never saw it like that. Today I still don't know what I could have done differently for my feelings to reach him, where I went wrong. All I know is that I loved him, with all my heart. And he despised it.

Whenever it became unbearable, I went to my little, peaceful sanctuary; Saito san's place. Not only he was Okita's best friend, but also there was some kind of deep connection between them where words were not necessary. He often spent time in Okita's room, not really saying anything, but sharing this kind of deep understanding they had. Saito knew better than to pity Okita for his state, his stoicism a quality Okita very much appreciated; in fact I would dare to say that of the Shinsegumi members aware of his illness, Saito was the only one that didn't change his behaviour around Okita.

After our visits, not always at the same time, we used to meet outside his room or just spend time in the outside of the compound watching time pass. Saito's calm demeanor always made me relax, and soothed my heart. He would always listen to me, never judging, his eyes clear with knowledge and sympathy. I thought I could trust everything with him, that I could be completely open about my feelings, about everything, not only because he knew Okita in depth but also because I considered him the only person I could share my worries with. I took him for granted, and ranted for hours, and he always provided me peace.

>That was until I overstep the boundary and told him about my feelings for Okita. That moment - now I see clearly - changed everything. He would sometimes avoid me saying he was busy, or avert his eyes from mine when we spoke, which he had never done. Our talks became less frequent and shorter, though he would keep visiting Okita. Until one day he told me he could no longer spend time like this. I felt as if I was losing the last strand of sanity, my last ray of hope. I was wrong of course, it was still too soon for that to happen yet, but at that moment I felt what I thought was the worst sensation in the world; I felt abandoned, thrown away, and I didn't know why. I pleaded with him, asked what I had done wrong. Finally from my mouth came the words <em>"Not you too please, don't leave me alone."</em> . I should have never said that. The next moment he was embracing me, pulling me against him in a desperate and strong hold, and kissing me. I should have seen it coming. I was so blind. I had been so blind to anything that wasn't Okita, that I didn't notice Saito's feelings towards me. The guilt, the regretfulness, the shame, it all took place at the same moment. Saito was in love with me.

What had I done.

We all broke each other. We messed ourselves up. Beyond repair.

I was Souji's. His in mind, heart, body, and soul. There was nothing left for me to surrender to him but he would only use me, and pity himself. And I broke down, and fell in Saito's arms. He loved me. And I could fly away, to a warm place again, a place where my love was not rejected, or underrated. Where I was cherished. I gave my body to

him, but my heart kept screaming for Souji in an irrational cry.

I used him. I'll never forgive myself for the pain I caused. For the hopes i could have lit up when mine were broken. For his mangled heart. The guilt became stronger everyday, but Saito never reproached me anything. Never.

>I hoped in time I would fall in love with him, only him, my gentle and kind Hajime, so awkward but honest in love. The opposite of Souji. Maybe in time, if Souji didn't exist. No, that's not it. If only Souji had never existed, if I had never met him, I may had had a chance. But it was too late; since the very first moment I met him I was changed without remedy, and no matter how far away he goes, even where I can't reach him anymore. I know I'll always belong to him. Because I met him my future was decided and I had no voice against it.<p>

I had already lost my sanity, in exchange for any love he could offer.

For me, Saito broke himself, tore his heart and vowed it to me. For any love I could feel, for any space left in my mangled heart he offered his fully, to try and mend us. I tried, I really tried to seek that place, that part of me that could love him and only him, but everytime I thought I would give up on Souji it came back again. The rush of feelings, the gag: I could not even breath with the thought of not having Souji. It was his death that terrified me so much I could not spend a day without him. As if exchanging my days for him would have saved his life, as if making a pact with a god that I knew would never listen to me. But I hoped in vain for miracles, a miracle that would save his life, even in exchange of mine.

And everytime I broke down, everytime Okita pushed me away, Saito was there waiting for me. Ready to fix me, offering himself wholeheartedly, a pure soul and heart I was deceiving. I was ashamed, so very ashamed of myself, I tried several times to break this relationship with him, until he said there was no relationship, that he already knew I was not yet his. But that he would wait, that he would always comfort me and support me. Because all he wanted was to make me happy, he would wait until I realized my feelings for him.

Why couldn't I love this man, I wondered for such a long agonizing time. Was it because there was no place left in my heart or was it because... I feared leaving Souji alone?

Either way I just spent my days hiding from Souji I was physically involved with Hajime, and at the same time wondering what he would do if he knew. If he would even care, if he... loved me enough to kill me. But he wouldn't find out, and I never told. And so days went by, while I tried to get closer to Souji but he would only push me away after using me, everytime with more desperation, everytime more violently and sadistically, everytime with more fear and vehemence, until he hurted me, until he thought I would run away from him. But I didn't, and he would always look at me with a mixture of relief and sadness, asking me always the same question before sending me away. Always wondering more to himself than to me \_"why do you keep coming back at me Chizuru, even when I don't want you to."\_

That day it was pouring outside, but I didn't realize until Hajime

covered my head with his haori.

\_ "How much more can I love him until I break down?" \_

\_ "You won't break down, I won't allow it. I'm here for you." \_

He pressed me tightly against his chest and embraced me. That night we made love and for the first time I felt warmed by him, and only him.

After that I noticed a subtle change between them, the mood became somehow a little colder and distant, but it's only now that I understand why. We were all already at our limit. And once you reach your limit you have little to lose.

\* \* \*

><p>Days went by, seasons changed, and summer arrived. The summer of the campaign.<p>

Saito had to travel up to Aizu, and Souji had to go to Osaka to treat his illness. And I could not follow both. I was breaking, breaking by seconds, each breath a painful pull that tore my heart apart.

>I realized something, there at the gates, watching the men leave, their blue haoris with the sign of 'makoto' imprinted on them. Saito was important, so important I could not take my eyes off him. So important I thought I would die if he walked away. Then and there I realized the cruelty of fate: I had fallen in love with Hajime. I was in love with both. And I realized it when he was to walk away, to almost a certain death, to his duty, to fulfill his honor as a samurai and as a proud member of the Shinsengumi and loyal to Aizu. I gripped his haori and in a desperate sob my words died away. His eyes were so gentle, so full of love, and understanding; maybe he also mistook my feelings, after being used and abused by me, how could I blame him? How could I possibly confess to him now, now of all the times? He was going away, he might not come back, and my love would look like pity for him too. My feelings were always mistaken, I always missed my chance to say them properly and ended up messing and hurting the ones I loved the most. And so, I prayed for him to come back, I cried and begged him to come back, because there was something very important I would tell him once he returned. I made him promise and, gently caressing my cheek, he promised not to deceive me. I wanted to kiss him, hold him, never let go. Not of this gentle, kind man. But he went away, his last smile, before turning away, only for me.<p>

\* \* \*

><p>I traveled to Osaka with Souji, I followed him there in hopes the treatment would help him somehow recover his sanity and health.<p>

But it did not. He spent his days sulking and agonizing over his current state, worrying for his comrades that were in battles, but hiding that worry in anger for not being there with them, blaming the only person he could: Hijikata san. I knew he was worried for Saito, I also was. Of all the campaigns his was the most dangerous, a battlefield surrounded by enemies of different factions all with a deep hatred for the Shinsengumi. It's not that we didn't trust Saito's skills, but odds were extremely unfavorable against

them.

One night, while I was helping him bath he pushed me down on the futon, a strength I thought he had lost long ago, pinning me under him. His voice was not playful, and his expression was serious as I had never seen it.

"Ne. You said you loved me, didn't you?"

I stared at him without an ounce of doubt and nodded my head. Several seconds ticked away and as if he was testing me, his eyes not leaving mine, searching for something. Then his next words stabbed me.

"But you are in love with him, aren't you?"

I gaped at him in horror. It couldn't be. It just couldn't be. How... He smirked, a somehow sad satisfaction mirroring in his smile.

"That's how it should have been from the beginning, I am no good for you."

"I'm in love with you Souji."

My words were strong, not an ounce of doubt in them, and he made a wince. His hands balled into tight fists, gripping at my clothes.

"Tell me why Chizuru. Why are you here? You put up with everything, you put up with my threats, you put up with my mistreats, just what are you? When will it be enough? What do I have to do for you to give up on me, do I have to kill you for real?"

His voice was full of desperation, cracking with each word. He wanted me away. But now I could see why: it was because he wanted to protect me, and he was trying even now, to give me an exit from this path that only lead to death.

It was too late, there was no option to begin with. I was his, I had always been.

"I'm not giving up on you. Never."

He closed his eyes, disbelieving until now, and embraced me tightly, like grasping at the last strand of sanity, or the last straw of life.

"You won't be satisfied until I'm completely insane, will you? Shall I make you suffer until I break you?"

"Break me then. Let me save you."

"I won't be saved."

"Then let me die with you. I will willingly die for you."

Then Souji looked at me, looked at me for the first time since I traveled with him to Osaka, and in his eyes I saw something I thought lost long ago; kindness. His voice, his gentle hands, and his smile, will remain as if burnt in my mind forever.

"What you just said, swear you won't regret it."

"I swear."

He kissed me gently, his lips chapped, and then sighed, his voice a whisper, before kissing me again.

"Ah... I can't do this anymore. Is this what it feels like going insane? I've been hurting you over and over purposedly yet it changed nothing. You didn't run away, you didn't give up on me. Did you want to become my sacrifice that bad? Let be it then, come here. Be mine, only mine, until the end."

That was the sweetest and most passionate night we spent together; he had never been so gentle with me, as if I would break, as if he treasured me. For the first time in my life I could feel he loved me. He didn't tell me, he never said it directly, but he conveyed everything without words, and I recall that, before I fell asleep, like a dream or an illusion or a trick my mind played on me, a slave of my cruel heart, he said something. Something that would make me understand finally all the struggle he had been in, all the things he had done for my sake, and why he tried to put me away.

"I won't say 'I love you', for that would condemn you to suffer forever my absence."

\* \* \*

><p>The following day Souji woke up with a high fever, all his strength having abandoned him. He could not eat, he could not drink and almost barely keep his conscience. Matsumoto sensei called another doctor, and we tried everything, but to no avail. His condition worsened and two days later he fell into a coma. I was helpless. He was letting himself die. He was giving up on life.</p>

I couldn't believe it and kept him company endlessly, at every moment, talking to him, begging him to be strong, for me. Because I loved him, because I wanted to be him for eternity, that my life was his, until I just begged for a last glance, a last smile, a last word. I begged him not to leave me like this.

On the fourth day I fell asleep with the first rays of the sun, after spending the night with him, begging him to wake up. That night his hand had answered mine and squeezed back gently, but he didn't wake up, and Matsumoto sensei said it was just a reflex, his fever still too high. My eyes closed heavily while thinking of all I would tell him once he finally opened his eyes.

I had a dream, a dream where the roles were reversed, where I loved Hajime with all my heart and he loved me too, where I was happy and Souji wasn't ill, and gave us blessings, always a good friend, always by our side. I woke up crying, crying because that dream moked me; by showing me an alternate reality where I was happy I was thrown into the despair of knowing I was not sane anymore, and I had no escape besides dreams. I wanted to dream forever, never waking up again. I wanted my mind to finally rest, my heart to stop hurting. I wanted the simple happiness a requited love provided. I wanted to be pure again, I wanted to feel something unadulterated, something that only belonged to the minds of children that dreamt of love before

experiencing it's painful consequences. I wanted to be innocent again. If this was how feeling was like, I wanted to never feel again. Drown, drown deep into a slumber and never wake up again.

A letter arrived. The Shinsengumi Third division had fallen in Aizu. There were no survivors.

Souji passed away that night.

I can't even recall what happened in the next 24 hours. I had wished I didn't feel a lot of times, but the moment it happened, the moment I was blocked, it was even worst than a nightmare you can't wake up from. Hope, like light, vanished. The emptiness took place and swallowed everything: my voice, my tears, my hunger, my vital functions. Nothing seemed to work, everything had stopped.

Because they were not here anymore.

They didn't exist in this world anymore.

How could they not? How could a world without Saito Hajime and Okita Souji exist? How could I exist in such a world? And then feelings came back rushing, crashing brutally against me, throwing me against the walls and furniture, like a puppet pulled violently by the strings, hit and damaged, screaming irrationally. My voice was not lost, it tore and ripped my throat until I coughed blood. I cried so much I thought I would drown because I couldn't breath all the while. I scratched my body with my nails and pulled from my hair and stripped my clothes. I broke things throwing myself at them. I became a whirlwind of feelings under no control, destroying anything that was left to destroy, even myself. And then it ended, subsided as it had come, like clouds slowly retreating from a storm, and peacefully leaving the sea calm and the effects of its destruction to be witnessed. A mess. An irreparable mess. I stood there, slowly breathing, surprised that I could still breath, a privilege I did not want because they didn't have it. I was alive, owner of a living body to do whatever I wanted with it.

And here I am now. Recording my miserable existence. Recording my mistakes, my broken heart, our broken lives. As a last act before the end. Because it was a long coming, don't pity me; I loved, loved like crazy, and in the final moments I felt what love was like, as a last gift from life before the stabbing end. I'll always be thankful for this gift, for this last chance, because I already knew the end, and this made it somehow less bitter, more sweet. It made me be able to die with a smile. Sad, but a smile. Beyond the misery, beyond the pain, all the memories are worth it. I will always cherish them, and pray, in this final moments, for their happiness, wherever they are.

I love you.

Goodbye.

/

2. Saito Hajime

\*\*Unrevealed thoughts\*\*

by Saito Hajime.

\* \* \*

><p>I'm in love with you.</p>

These are the words I can never say. Because you're not mine, because you'll never be. Because your heart belongs to another man, because he's the only one before your eyes, I can't say I love you.

Sometimes I can't even breath.

I want to hold you, hold you so strongly you never leave my arms, so strongly you can't ever think of another man, so you'll never need anyone but me. So I can be enough.

But I'm not. And it hurts.

If I cannot be your beloved, I'll be your friend. That will be enough, I thought. I lied to myself, knowingly. Of course it would never be enough. Seeing you get hurt, suffer, and cry before me, your pure heart stained by a tainted love.

If I cannot be your beloved, then, I will be your lover. That way I can hold you, that way I can make you mine. Mine in the only way you'll let me have you. In a way to reach you, slowly but perseveringly, in a way so I can, someday, own your heart. I know it's unlikely, but I'll keep on trying. Because every moment I spend with you is worth all this pain. Because I love you. Because I'll love you forever.

I'll be anything you want me to. Just don't leave me alone. Because I won't. Ever.

I promise you .

### 3. Okita Souji

\*\*Unrevealed thoughts\*\*

by Okita Souji.

\* \* \*

><p>I used to wake up to the sound of birds chirping. To the light of the first rays of sun. To the vibrations of feet running up and down the corridor to the kendo practice.</p>

But not to the starts of a violent cough, not to the piercing pain in my chest. Not to the taste of blood. Now it had become something normal, and I'm scared.

So very scared.

Scared my life is ending, and I've not fullfilled any of my duties. Scared my life is ending before I can see Kondou san and Hijikata san to their dreams. Scared I can't even see myself reach any of

mine.

I'm dying.

If this is how my life was bound to end, drowned in the mediocrity of never finishing anything, I wish I had never been born. Leaving things half way, leaving the people I gave my everything to see their dreams come true... Leaving you.

If I was bound to die and leave you before anything even started, I wish I had never met you. Halfway, unfinished, undisclosed. I don't want to start anything else I can't finish. I can't allow myself to leave you halfway the road.

Because I don't even know my own heart, how can I even start answering your feelings? I'll die, and whatever comes out of my mouth now, whatever I do with you now will only be a burden in your future. I don't have a future, I don't have a life to share with you. So I don't want you. I don't want you. I don't want to want you.

Please go away before I lose myself in you. Before I realize my feelings.

Please don't love me.

End  
file.